

TO: JAMES L. APP, CITY MANAGER

FROM: BOB LATA, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) DESIGNATION,  
HIGHWAY 46 WEST / 101 INTERCHANGE

DATE: FEBRUARY 18, 2003

Needs: For the City Council to consider initiating a General Plan Amendment to modify the Level of Service (LOS) standard for the Highway 101/46 West Interchange area on a temporary basis until the interchange can be reconstructed.

Facts:

- 1 Long-term improvements to the Highway 46 West / 101 interchange are being addressed through preparation of a Project Study Report (PSR). The goal is to complete the PSR by the end of calendar year 2003.
- 2 The PSR will probably propose that long-term improvements be installed in three phases (west side, east side, and the bridge in the center), based on relative need and costs. The longer-term goal is to return to LOS "C".
- 3 It will be 5 to 10 years before the first phase of the long-term improvements to the interchange (the west side) can be completed. In the meantime there is a need to address both traffic congestion and traffic safety through interim improvements.
- 4 Interim improvements would consist of measures to improve traffic flow through the interchange and also extending the length of the southbound off-ramp of Highway 101.
- 5 As proposed, pending new developments within the City's jurisdiction would be responsible for funding both interim improvements estimated at \$585,000 and also participating in the cost of long-term improvements being planned through the PSR.
- 6 The proposal before the City Council is to modify the General Plan LOS standard "C" to "D" for a limited geographic area and for an

interim period of time. This change in LOS standard would allow pending developments to proceed in conjunction with them funding the interim improvements to the interchange and off-ramp.

- 7 Attached is a map that illustrates the geographic area and the limited number of properties within the City that could accommodate new development proposals.
- 8 A General Plan Amendment to consider a change to the City's LOS standard would be subject to public hearings before both the Planning Commission and City Council.

#### Analysis and

Conclusion: The PSR is designed to address "long-term" improvement needs at the Highway 46 West / 101 Interchange. There are shorter term congestion and safety concerns that can be addressed by interim improvements projected to cost about \$585,000:

- The interchange is currently operating at Level of Service (LOS) "D" during peak hour traffic conditions. There are traffic control and design modifications that can improve the efficiency of the interchange; and
- The southbound off-ramp is not long enough. There are reports of a line of vehicles queuing onto Highway 101, creating safety concerns.

There are now six (6) pending developments within City boundaries that cannot proceed without either a change to the General Plan LOS or an EIR with Statements of Overriding Circumstances. Allowing these and other pending developments within the City to proceed has a two-fold advantage:

1. The property owners are obligating themselves to participate in the funding of the long-term improvements; and
2. The property owners would also provide funding estimated at \$585,000 for the interim improvements. The developers of these projects have been advised that the City would not grant certificates of occupancy unless the interim improvements are in place.

What are the related factors?

- The interchange is currently at LOS "D" during peak traffic periods (Friday and Saturday afternoons);

- Denying new development projects on the limited number of vacant parcels in the City will not improve the LOS or address the off-ramp safety concerns;
- Without interim improvements to the interchange and off-ramp, congestion through the interchange and the ramp safety concerns will continue to get worse because of development activity in the County unincorporated area and regional traffic growth;
- LOS “D” is both the Caltrans standard and also the basis for the 1997 Cooperative Agreement with the County and SLOCOG;
- The proposed change to LOS “D” would only be for this interchange area and would only be for the interim period until the longer-term improvements to the interchange can be addressed.
- The interim period before the long-term improvements could be funded and constructed is anticipated to be 5 to 10 years, not unlike the expectation the City had for the Niblick Bridge widening project.
- The number of properties that could potentially develop within the City are relatively limited. There is considerably more long-term potential growth in traffic from County and regional sources.
- LOS “D” will only occur at peak hour times (Friday and Saturday afternoon), but the frequency of these peaks will increase over time with growth in both local and regional traffic.

In summary, approving an interim designation of LOS “D” for the subject interchange would allow developments to proceed. These developments would be obligated to pay for both interim improvements to address congestion and safety, and also participate in the funding of longer-term improvements that would be spelled out in the PSR.

To not permit pending developments in the City to proceed would encourage further development projects in the County and not address either the interim or long-term improvement needs of the interchange.

Policy

Reference: General Plan; Cooperative Agreement with Council of Governments

Fiscal

Impact: None; mitigation measures would be funded by benefiting property owners.

- Options:
- a. Direct staff to initiate a General Plan Amendment that would consider a modification to the City's LOS standard for an interim period and only for the Highway 46 West / 101 interchange area. The change in standard would be from "C" to "D" and the interim period would be until a Project Study Report is adopted and implemented in a manner designed to provide future LOS "C" for the subject interchange. Project specific considerations would be deferred to the Planning Commission and staff would seek the City Attorney's assistance to formulate participation agreements that would ensure that the set of feasible short-term mitigation measures, including extension of the southbound Highway 101 off-ramp, would be implemented.
  - b. Amend, modify or reject the foregoing options.

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